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A  
L E T T E R  
ON THE  
PRESENT SITUATION  
OF  
P U B L I C A F F A I R S.

---

BY SIR RICHARD MUSGRAVE, BART.  
MEMBER OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT.

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DEDICATED TO  
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF PORTLAND.

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Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows; each thing meets  
In meer oppugnancy; the bounded waters  
Would lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a sop of all this solid globe;  
Strength would be lord of imbecility,  
And the rude son would strike his father dead:  
Force would be right, or rather right and wrong,  
Between whose endless jar Justice presides,  
Would lose their name, and so would Justice too.

SHAKSPEARE.

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TO  
HIS GRACE  
THE  
DUKE OF PORTLAND.

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MY LORD DUKE,

**A**NIMATED by the bright example of your Grace, who has so nobly and disinterestedly come forward in defence of the empire at a time of emergency, I have made a feeble effort (in these few sheets which I take the liberty of dedicating to you) to dispel those errors which have been maliciously disseminated to create popular discontent. Your Grace's public and private virtues are so universally known and acknowledged, that no person can accuse me of flattery when I say that there is a striking resemblance between your character and that of Aristides; for as he was reputed the most upright person in Greece, your Grace is confessedly such in England, and, like him, you have warmly espoused the cause of your country, when its existence was threatened

by a barbarous foreign enemy ; having with true patriotifm facrificed, for the public good, all former jealousies and resentments, from whatever caufes they might have arifen, or however juftly they might have been grounded.

The confidence which the Public have of your integrity is fo great, that they are now perfuaded, that every meafure adopted in the Cabinet will be grounded on the juftest principles, by which the efforts of all orders will be united for general prefervation.

I have the honour to be,

With the moft profound refpect,

Your Grace's moft obedient,

Humble fervant,

**RICHARD MUSGRAVE.**

*November,*

1794.



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A  
L E T T E R  
ON THE  
PRESENT SITUATION  
OF  
P U B L I C A F F A I R S.

---

DEAR SIR,

WHEN you were recently in this kingdom, I had the pleasure of conversing with you on the policy of engaging in and of continuing the present war, on the origin of the elective franchise, the alteration it has undergone in point of value, and the probable consequences likely to arise from extending it to a larger portion of the people, and on the state of our constitution before the reign of Charles the First, and the improvements which it has gradually received since then; but as your stay here was too short to afford me an opportunity of giving you my sentiments on these subjects at large, I propose to do so in the following pages.

If we consider dispassionately the arguments of those who contend that we should have remained in a state of neutrality towards the French, or that we should now make peace with them, we shall

shall have reason to conclude that they are the ebullitions of party spirit and disappointed ambition, which will ever *strive to make the worse appear the better reason*.

If France, when even under a fixed government, had made any preparations for war, an English Minister who did not immediately put Great Britain in a state of defence, would deserve to be impeached; now the French not only prepared a formidable armament by sea and land, but they avowed, in their National Convention, a resolution to overturn all the governments in Europe, and to establish their own system of anarchy in their stead. Many of their writers, particularly Brissot, Camille Desmoulins, and Tom Paine, declared this in their publications; and the latter asserted, in the most unequivocal terms, that it was essential to the permanence of their Republic.

The English Minister would have been guilty of the most criminal neglect, if he entertained a doubt of their intentions, when Jean de Brie made a motion in their Pandemonium, to send forth 1200 assassins, to murder all the kings in Europe, and when they made a wanton aggression on our ally the Dutch. They beheld with malignant envy the strength, splendor, and opulence of Great Britain, and they knew that they could not hope to accomplish their infernal scheme, unless they first laid her prostrate; because she could not, consistent with her honour or her interest, suffer those inhuman robbers to over-run and plunder the nations with whom she had formed alliances and commercial connections: they, therefore, sent emissaries into England, well supplied with money, to introduce that system into it by which they subverted all social order in their own country: they formed Jacobin societies, which

which corresponded with similar ones in France; assimilated to them in every respect, corresponded with them, and promised to co-operate with them in introducing French liberty when matters were ripe for that purpose; they even made a considerable progress, through English agents, in poisoning the minds of the populace, to whom they gave feasts and revels, where they drank gratis large potations of porter and gin, to the cause of French liberty and equality; and they taught them to believe that a golden age was near, when there would be no more rents or taxes paid, and when they, like their neighbours in France, may exercise unbounded rapine with impunity on the honest accumulations of industry. The English Jacobin clubs multiplied to such a degree in every part of England, Ireland, and Scotland, were linked together by so well connected a chain, and had diffused so widely their phlogistic principles, that they could suddenly have conveyed an electric shock through the whole empire, which would in an instant have overturned the government, as it did in France; for they worked as silently as moles, and would have started up with the fierceness of tigers. The Abbe Baruelle, in his account of the massacre of the French clergy, observes, “ Those who blame the French nobility for not remaining in France to support the throne, are little acquainted with the French Revolution, or the means by which it was originally conducted; the conspirators had artfully concealed their designs; on a signal given the 14th of July, by the leaders at Paris, all the provincial conventicles started into light.\* The infernal machinations of these clubbists

\* The rapid and direful progress which the riot in 1782 made in a few days, though it was not planned with deliberation, shews with what gigantic strides sedition can advance.



clubbists were discovered, not only by their resolutions and their correspondence with their brethren in France, which they continued till the year 1794, but they had even begun to prepare pikes, the instruments of carnage. After the French had given such base indications of hostility, and even after they had murdered their King, they had the folly and temerity of attempting so far to impose on the credulity of our Ministers as to propose terms of neutrality. Had England been lulled into a state of indolent security, by continuing neuter, while treason, in grim repose, was brooding in her bosom, her rebellious subjects would have continued to increase their friends, and to disseminate their volcanic principles, till they had made an explosion; and they would have been seconded by the French, who would have been armed, while we were in a defenceless state: thus we should have had a foreign and intestine war to encounter at the same time.

Private associations, if peaceably conducted, are not illegal. The Commons resolved, in 1695, that whoever should affirm an association was illegal, should be deemed a promoter of the designs of James the Second, and an enemy to the laws and liberties of the kingdom; and the Riot Act, which passed in the year 1715, does not contravene private associations, provided they are carried on in a peaceable manner: but when war was declared, it was high treason to communicate or hold any council with the French; and this nest of vipers could not correspond with them, or carry on their infernal designs, without endangering their lives and the confiscation of their property. We may deduce, from the condition in life of the majority of those who  
have

have been detected, that they had but little to lose, and that their main object was to plunder wealth and degrade greatness.

The words of Cicero to the Cataline conspirators at Rome should convey a salutary admonition to such traitors, and teach them that they could not have enjoyed the fruits of their plunder for any time.

“ But, suppose they had obtained what they  
 “ sought with so much ardour, could they hope  
 “ that they would be Consuls, Dictators, or  
 “ Kings, in the midst of the conflagration of the  
 “ city and the carnage of their fellow-citizens,  
 “ which they endeavoured to effect with nefarious  
 “ and malignant designs? Do they not  
 “ perceive that what they thirst for would be en-  
 “ joyed by some vagabond or gladiator.”\*

The chaotic state of France, where both power and property are constantly shifting from one hand to another, should be a sufficient warning to check them in their predatory views. The preservation of the nation may be in a great measure imputed to the wise and benevolent Mr. Burke, who early rung the alarm-bell, and secured us from the infection of deleterious French principles. His book on French affairs contains more political wisdom and more profound knowledge of practical government than any that ever appeared, and in future ages it will tend to endear the British constitution to the subjects of it. The bright effulgence of his genius, like the sun, raised up some buzzing insects, who cavilled at  
 B the

\* Quod si jam sint id quod cum summo furore concupiunt adepti, num illi in cinere urbis et sanguine civium quæ mente conscelerata ac nefaria concupierunt se consules dictatores aut etiam reges futuros? Non vident id se cupere, quod si adepti fuerint fugitivo alicui aut gladiatori concedi sit necesse. *Oratio Secunda contra Catalinam.*

the doctrines which he advanced ; but the state of France proves the futility of their assertions, and that he spoke prophetic truth. His long and luminous life, devoted to the cause of wisdom and virtue, is more bright in its setting than the meridian blaze of most other geniuses. England had many other strong motives for declining a neutrality besides defending her Ally from an unprovoked attack, and stifling this rebellion, which threatened her existence. I have observed that France had given unquestionable proofs of her hostile views towards England: let us now examine the many collateral circumstances which should at this time render her an object of alarm to our Ministers. Her kingdom is compact; it contains little short of one fourth of the population of Europe; it navigates three seas; she had a powerful navy and a formidable army; rich and extensive colonies; she was warlike and well skilled in tactics; and she avowedly aspired to universal conquest. But what heightened all these advantages was, that her subjects, released from every religious and moral tie, were animated by an enthusiasm which no other nation ever experienced. When the rival of England was thus circumstanced, it was the most consummate wisdom in her Ministers to declare war, and what has happened, proves that France would have easily conquered most of the states on the European Continent, if our Administration had not checked them in their ambitious career. Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, all the powers in the Adriatic and Archipelago, and probably on the Dardanelles, the Marmora, the Bosphorus, and Black Sea, would have been subdued by her.\* It is obvious,

\* This idea cannot appear extravagant, if we consider that the little Republic of Genoa had very large possessions in Greece, the Archipelago, and the Black Sea.



obvious, from what has occurred, that Spain, the only considerable naval power in the Mediterranean, could not have successfully opposed her; nay, that kingdom, unassisted by England, would have been easily ravaged by her. Most of the German states and Holland must have fallen a prey to her. When she had advanced so far in her victorious progress, Sweden and Denmark could have made but a feeble resistance to her. Could England, consistent with common policy, continue a tame spectator, while those countries, whose commercial connections with her are the source of her present prosperity, were reduced to desolation? She is as much interested in maintaining the rights of such nations, with whom she carries on an extensive and beneficial trade, as those of her own colonies. The case of America proves this in the clearest manner. While subject to England, she was at a monstrous expence in protecting her during war, and in time of peace in maintaining a military and civil establishment there, and in giving a bounty on every article of American produce imported into England; she is now exonerated from this heavy expence, and still carries on a very advantageous trade with America. Many persons, from a want of information on this subject are apt to raise a murmur of discontent against our Ministers for having originally embarked in the war, and now for continuing it; I would recommend to such persons to see, in Anderson's History of Commerce, or even in Guthrie's Geography, the state of our exports and imports to and from the countries which I have mentioned, and the balance of trade in favour of England, and they will agree with me that it would be highly criminal in Administration to suffer the French to ravage them, and to introduce into them that

anarchy which they have established in their own. To what purpose then, would England send to their ports the immense quantities of her manufactures which she does at present? Her commerce would have been destroyed, and of course her revenue, and then the proprietors of the funds would look in vain for their interest, public credit would be ruined, and with the destruction of our trade our navy would be annihilated. England, then, is not idly or wantonly fighting for foreign nations; she is contending for that wealth and prosperity which she now enjoys—nay, for her very existence. When the French were enriched by the plunder of such extensive and wealthy states, when they had a great navy and a numerous army flushed with victory, which would have increased their enthusiasm, could England, poor solitary England, unarmed, without an ally, and hatching treason in her bowels, have been able to resist? No; it would have been impossible; and England, fair England,

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
 This other Eden, demy paradise;  
 This fortress built by nature for herself  
 Against infection and the hand of war;  
 This happy breed of men, this little world,  
 This precious stone, set in the silver sea,  
 Which serves it in the office of a wall;  
 Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
 Against the envy of less happy lands,

SHAKESPEARE, Richard II.

Must have fallen, and not to a generous enemy, but to a horde of robbers, more fierce and cruel than the Saracens, the Tartars, or the Turks. If we were inclined to peace, with whom could we make it? Is it with the National Convention, bathed in blood, whose proceedings are delirious; who,

who, after having murdered their King, have attempted to dethrone their God; who have denounced vengeance against all European nations, and whose government is so uncertain and variable, that it may be compared to the shiftings of a pantomime?

*Fiet enim subito sus horridus atraque tigris,  
Squamosusque draco et fulva cervice læna,  
Omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum.*

The Girondine party have been ejected, and murdered by the Mountain; a faction raised by the gold of that desperate ruffian Egalite, who headed it for some time, but was at last brought to condign punishment by his fellow assassins. His successor, Robespierre, fell a sacrifice to his ambition, when, after wading through blood, he had almost attained the highest pinnacle of it. The Convention is at this moment in a state of fermentation, and as the two parties are nearly balanced, it is certain that a struggle for pre-eminence will end in a bloody conflict. I should wish to be informed, by those who are advocates for peace, how Administration can weigh the strength of each party, so as to determine which, in the day of projection, will be the ruling power.\* France may at present be compared to a man in a violent raging fever, whose strength, exalted by his disease, renders him formidable to all those who approach him. Purulent eruptions, the result of his malady, rise on his body, and  
continue

\* It is obvious that we cannot, consistent with policy or prudence, treat with the National Convention. It should be considered whether we may not do so with the Jacobin Club, the primary Assemblies, or the Sans Culotte assassins of St. Marceau and St. Antoine, as the members of the Convention have often appealed to them as a superior power.



continue a short time prominent ; but dying, they are succeeded by others : at length, awakened by a constant succession of them, and by frenetic exertions, he will sink into a state of languor and debility. Any person who has attentively observed the proceedings of the National Convention, must have perceived in them a total ignorance of the science of legislation, and that their chaotic mass of laws must be a fruitful source of dissension, and prevent them from having a permanent government ; so that another nation may expect that they can adhere to any treaty ; but their removing at once the salutary influence of religion, should have excluded the most distant hope that any good faith could have been expected from them. Not only the wisest and most polished, but even the most barbarous nations, have had some religion which they held sacred, and which they regarded as an essential bond of society.

Isocrates tells us, that the principal care of the Athenians was to abolish nothing they had received from their ancestors in matters of religion, nor to make any addition to what they had established.\* Josephus mentions, that the Scythians, who delighted in human blood, were very tenacious of their religious rites, and put Anacharsis to death because he preferred those of Greece. Socrates was put to death because he introduced new deities into Athens, and did not esteem such as were worshipped in the city. Anaxagoras, the preceptor of Pericles, was banished from Athens, because he entertained exalted ideas of a Supreme intelligent being. But when the Athenians, and the other Grecian republics, about three centuries before Christ, adopted the Epicurean system, which denied the existence of a God, they,

\* Isocrates Arcopagus.

they, like the French, immediately sunk into the lowest state of debasement. Polybius, who was an eye-witness of it, tells us, that, in consequence of it, venality, fraud, treachery, a disregard of oaths, and of every tie, human and divine, ensued from it, and were the sure presage of their ruin. Mæcenas, in his advice to Augustus, said to him, “ Perform divine worship, in all things, “ exactly according to the custom of your ancestors, and suffer no innovations in religion, “ because those who create such, are apt to make “ changes in civil affairs:” Hence conspiracies, seditions, and riots; things very dangerous to Government.\*

It was a standing law, of an early date, at Rome, “ That no one should have separately new “ Gods, nor worship privately foreign Gods, unless admitted by the Commonwealth.” † Cicero, who knew better than those modern philosophers, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Helvetius, in what the true dignity of human nature consisted, and who wished more than them to promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, says, “ That the subversion of religion must be attended with great “ confusion and disorders, and that if piety towards the Gods be cast off, mutual good faith, “ the bonds of society and justice, that most excellent of all virtues, will perish.‡

Machiavel, a very shrewd and ingenious political writer, says, “ All rulers of kingdoms, and “ commonwealths, ought to have a special regard to the fundamental principles of the religion of their country; for while they are kept “ sacred and inviolate, it will be an easy matter “ to

\* Dion. Cassius, lib. lii.

† Cicero de Legibus, lib. ii.

‡ Cicero de Legibus, lib. i.

“ to maintain devotion, and consequently good order and union amongst their subjects.” \*

Now the French Convention, at the same time that they subverted all civil order, contrary to the policy of every wise nation, totally removed the salutary influence of religion from the people, by which they have converted them into a horde of robbers and assassins. We do not find, in the annals of history, any nation that ever equalled, for wanton barbarity and cruelty, the French in their present state, but a sept of people in Syria, whose profession was that of murder and robbery.

Their prince or chieftain was called the Old Man of the Mountain. As they made it a practice to send forth bravoës to murder kings and princes, many of them paid a tribute to those wretches, to purchase their safety. They had Lewis of Bavaria murdered in the 13th century. As they were called assassins, for some reason not well ascertained, persons who made a practice of committing murder have, in succeeding times, been denominated assassins. It is surprising that this infernal plan of prostrating religion, which had been systematically pursued by men of letters in France for many years, should, when publicly avowed, have so suddenly diffused its baneful effects, like a contagion among all the lower orders of the people. Monsieur Diderot, many years since, was known to declare, that he wished to see the last monarch in Europe hanged with the guts of the last priest. Mirabeau, before he died, expressed concern that he did not live to see all religions abolished ; and yet Cicero, who was an augur, declared that he could scarce look in the face of his brother augurs without smiling, because in his heart he was convinced of the absurdity of the Roman

\* Political Discourses on Livy, lib. i. chap. 12.



Roman superstition ; but, persuaded that some religious system was absolutely necessary for the preservation of moral harmony, he publicly displayed great veneration for that of his own country.

Philip, after having pronounced a long harangue on the virtue of patriotism, in the tribune of the Jacobins, produced the heads of his father and mother, which he said he had cut off, because they had refused to attend a mass celebrated by a Constitutional priest ; and he was received with reiterated applauses. Du Pont, a wretch of the lowest order, was honoured with loud plaudits when he announced himself to be an Atheist, in that Pandemonium the National Convention. As soon as the Christian religion was renounced, the people displayed the most sanguinary spirit, in an indiscriminate slaughter of their clergy \* and nobility ; and at last, in gratifying their avarice and private revenge, neither the weakness of old age, or childhood, nor the tenderness of the sex, were spared. The butcheries occasioned by the proscriptions of Marius and Sylla, and the two triumvirates, were moderate compared to this dreadful scene of carnage ; of which we may say, in the words of our great bard, Shakespeare,

And this so sole and so unmatchable,  
Shall give a holiness, a purity,  
To the yet unbegotten sins of time,  
And prove a deadly bloodshed but a jest,  
Exampl'd by this heinous spectacle.

Many persons, from malignant views, are endeavouring to propagate an opinion, that we should not interfere in the politics of the continent,

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\* A full account of the murder of the French clergy may be seen in a book published by the Abbé Baruelle.

nent, but depend on the security of our insular situation, and by doing so, they have spread a spirit of discontent even among persons who have the sincerest attachment to their country, but who have not leisure or opportunity to investigate the real interest of England. Sir Robert Cotton, the great antiquarian, wrote a treatise, in the reign of James I. to prove that England should not pay any regard to foreign wars or foreign acquisitions, as they tended to exhaust the kingdom without deriving any solid advantage from them; and that Monarch, whose pusillanimous and pacific disposition they flattered, was despised by most of the Princes in Europe, in consequence of having adhered to them. Swayed by such doctrines, he beheld, with the utmost indifference, an offensive league formed by the House of Austria, all the Catholic Princes of Germany, Spain, Poland, and even Saxony, which was dangerous to the existence of Holland, by which his son-in-law, the Elector Palatine, was deprived of his dominions, and the Protestant religion was on the point of being extinguished. He vainly imagined that his virtues of justice and moderation were so conspicuous, that the different powers on the Continent would submit to his arbitration. His interposition in the affairs of Europe, by no other means than that of entreaties, embassies, and negotiations, brought him into such contempt, that he was ridiculed for it in a farce at Brussels. The wise Queen Elizabeth, who laid the foundation of our present wealth and power, was far from paying no attention to foreign affairs. She prevented Philip II. from accomplishing his scheme of universal empire: not only by providing for the security of her own dominions, but by employing men and money to occupy him with divisions abroad. She prevented France from becoming a province

to Spain, which must have been fatal to the liberties of Europe; and she afterwards afforded such assistance to the United Provinces, as enabled them to become an independent state, which has in succeeding times tended to preserve the independence of the other European powers against the ambitious views of France. The same policy which led her to do so, should induce England at this time to risque her very existence, rather than suffer the French to conquer Holland, and to keep possession of it and Flanders. Spain, at that time the most powerful kingdom in Europe, was particularly formidable to England, by her possessing a great length of coast opposite to her, from near Calais to the Texel, containing many capacious harbours; and the extensive dominions of the House of Burgundy in the rear of it. By this, Spain was enabled not only to annoy our trade to the north, but, by keeping a large army in readiness to make a descent on England, would lay her under a necessity of maintaining one of equal force, which would be very expensive, and in a great measure have defeated the advantages of her insular situation. This was evinced in the attempt which Philip II. made to invade England with the Spanish armada; for if the Prince of Parma, who had a formidable Spanish army in Flanders ready to land in England, had succeeded, it is allowed by all our historians that he would have made a complete conquest of it. If the possession of that coast, only from Dunkirk to the Texel, by the Spaniards, whose kingdom is so remote from it, was so alarming to Queen Elizabeth, surely it must be much more dangerous to England, to suffer France to retain them, as they connect with her very populous kingdom, and as thereby she would command the entire coast from Ushant to the Texel. There is another circum-



stance which would make this danger more alarming. At the same time that France would have so many large harbours to the north-east of Calais, in which a powerful navy may be ready to second an invasion, England has not a single port to the north of Dover, on the opposite coast, in which a large fleet could ride with safety, and sail out suddenly for her protection, in case of emergency; and, as the smallest delay in such a case may be irretrievable, she must rest her defence on a large army, the expence of which would be ruinous. Like a heavy suit of armour, which, though it may protect the human body from foreign assaults, will gradually consume its strength, and reduce it to debility. The English Parliament have considered this point so important, that they have insisted, as a condition in the treaties of Utrecht, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Fontainebleau, that the harbour of Dunkirk should be demolished; though it is fit only for the reception of small privateers. If the possession of so small a harbour as Dunkirk by the French, has been thought so detrimental to England, how alarming must be it to her, to suffer them to retain all the ports in Flanders and Holland? Another important advantage which France would derive from the possession of those countries, and which would give her a very dangerous sway in the balance of power, is this: By commanding the navigation of the Rhine, the Maese, the Scheldt, and the Moselle, she would have an unbounded power over the trade of many German states, and even materially influence that of Geneva and Switzerland. Those who are ignorant of the true interest of England, exclaim against subsidizing foreign states, by which they increase popular discontent: but as the many objects which I have described, and on which the present prosperity of England depends,

depends, cannot be attained without it, every person of candour must admit that it is wise and necessary: it will also appear evident that there is great economy in doing so. It is absolutely necessary that England should have the assistance of a large land armament on the continent in time of war, to maintain the balance of power, and to protect her allies and commercial friends. Continental Princes are obliged at all times to maintain large armies for their defence: and they can afford to hire them to England for one half of what she could support her own. Taking into consideration, then, what she saves by keeping but a small military establishment in time of peace, she finds it to be very great economy to subsidize foreigners during a war. This practice is not new. It has been regularly followed by the ministers of four succeeding princes previous to the present reign; and it is not to be supposed that it would have been invariably followed, unless it were wise and politic. The great Lord Chatham, whose wisdom and knowledge of the real interest of England could be equalled only by his disinterestedness, which was evinced by the circumstances in which he died, found it absolutely necessary. There is not a doubt but that a great part of Europe would have been subdued by France since the beginning of this century, but for the active interference of England. She counted among her allies, in the year, 1747, two Empreſſes, the Kings of Prussia, Sardinia, and five German Princes. The late Doctor Campbell, who understood, and delineated better than any other writer, the true policy and commercial interest of England, has sanctioned my assertions by the most unquestionable arguments, deduced from history and experience; and as he wrote coolly and dispassionately, and as his mind was

not

not warped by the rancour and prejudice of party, we should at this time pay some respect to his opinion. He tells us, “ that the first point dictated by our interest, is the maintaining others in their rights, or, to make use of a more known term, to support the independency of the powers of Europe; because the subduing other countries must lessen the number of inhabitants, extinguish industry amongst them, and consequently enfeeble and impoverish them, which must be detrimental to us, if we correspond or trade with them. Another point is the stipulating with foreign nations, proper terms of security, indulgence, and respect for our subjects, and for the effects which they shall carry from time to time into those countries, in return for which we must covenant to do and perform what shall be done on our parts. When these kind of alliances are once formed with due deliberation, they become sacred ties with respect to us, and we are bound punctually to fulfil them; so that whatever different form appearances may wear, the true interest of Great Britain is always to comply exactly with her treaties. The many alterations that happen daily in the world afford, and will always afford, sufficient reasons for our exerting ourselves, not without hazard and expense, in favour of some or other of our allies; which however must be done, and done with spirit and cheerfulness, if we remain a free, a great, and a respected people. It is in vain to hope to maintain our character by a selfish and surly, or by a lazy and inactive behaviour. If we reason ever so little with ourselves, we may be satisfied of this; if we consult history, history will convince us; if we have recourse to experience, experience will read us the same lecture. Neither ought we to consider what we

“ do



“ do as any burthen or inconveniency, since it  
 “ arises from the rank and figure we make in the  
 “ world ; from those connexions which have been  
 “ the fruit of our significancy, and by which that  
 “ is upheld and secured. In short, when we suc-  
 “ cour our neighbours, we do it from a principle  
 “ of justice to ourselves ; we flourish in part  
 “ from the commerce we have with them, and,  
 “ having a stake in their welfare, it is really con-  
 “ sulting our own interest when we fulfil those  
 “ engagements that we entered into on account  
 “ of that stake ; and therefore instead of repining  
 “ that we are obliged to it, we ought to rejoice  
 “ that it is in our power, and shew by our ala-  
 “ crity that it is our will. These are the general  
 “ principles of British policy, deduced from those  
 “ transactions which, after having been often and  
 “ seriously examined in the wisest and greatest  
 “ assemblies, have received repeated, as well as  
 “ public sanctions.”\*

A great outcry has been raised against our sub-  
 sidizing the King of Sardinia, because those who  
 have been stung by disappointed ambition en-  
 deavour to impose on the ignorant and credulous  
 multitude, by representing that we have no more  
 connection with him, and should be no more  
 concerned about him than the Great Mogul.  
 Let us see now what Doctor Campbell says of him ;  
 he tells us “ that nothing can be of greater im-  
 “ portance to the trade of England than to pre-  
 “ serve the balance in Italy ; which if lost, must  
 “ necessarily throw that valuable branch of com-  
 “ merce, which we enjoy there, and from which  
 “ we derive a considerable annual profit, into  
 “ other hands, and which is worst of all, into the  
 “ hands of the French ; that as a trading nation,  
 “ we

\* Political Survey of Europe.

“ we are as much interested to oppose the growth  
 “ of the French power as the King of Sardinia  
 “ himself out of regard to his own safety. That  
 “ this sufficiently shews, that there is nothing of  
 “ political art, in what we have been told, of the  
 “ expediency of supporting this monarch against  
 “ all his enemies, though at a large expense.  
 “ He tells us, that Queen Anne, led by the same  
 “ motives, insisted at the conclusion of the treaty  
 “ of Utrecht upon the cession of the kingdom of  
 “ Sicily to him, and that the crown of Spain, in  
 “ case of the failure of Philip V. should be en-  
 “ tailed on him.” We are not induced to sub-  
 sidize the King of Sardinia by any direct com-  
 mercial connection with him, for his Italian ter-  
 ritories are almost entirely inland, having but  
 three very inconsiderable ports, those of Nice,  
 Oneglia, and Villa Franca : but as his dominions  
 are situated in the plains of Piedmont, at the foot  
 of the Alps, which form a tremendous barrier  
 between him and France ; and as he owns, and  
 has fortified all the passes in them, he is enabled  
 with a small subsidy to protect Italy, with which  
 we have a very extensive and beneficial trade.  
 We must admit, that the French have more than  
 once penetrated into Piedmont, but as the Alps  
 prevent them from supplying their army with those  
 constant resources which are absolutely necessary  
 for them, they never have been able to continue  
 in possession of it.\* We are interested in the  
 preservation of Holland, not only because we  
 carry on a very advantageous trade with her, but  
 because she enables us, as an ally, to support the  
 balance of power against the other maritime states.  
 For this reason, the different powers of Europe  
 were

\* The Alps have been called the Tomb of the French, because  
 great numbers of them have, at different times, fallen in their at-  
 tempts to pass these mountains.

were so alarmed at the victorious progress of Lewis XIV's arms, in the year 1672, when he attempted to conquer Holland, that the Emperor, and some other Princes of Germany, promised to assist the Dutch; and even Spain sent them a body of troops, though they had renounced their allegiance to her in the preceding century. At that time Lewis XIV. entered Holland with an army of 180,000 men, commanded by the great Marshal Turenne and the Duke of Luxemburg, and conquered the provinces of Guelderland, Overijssel, and Utrecht.\* He even took the small town of Naerden, within three leagues of Amsterdam; and yet Holland was saved by an inundation which obliged Lewis to withdraw his troops. Thus it appears that the princes of Europe have, for above two centuries, considered the balance of power so much concerned in the independence of Holland, that France and England assisted her to become free in the 16th century, and Spain, in the succeeding one, aided her against France. Tremendous as the French appear, they cannot, from the nature of things, continue so long. The report recently made by the Committee of Public and General Safety, exhibits a strong picture of the deplorable state to which that kingdom is reduced. It states  
 “ that the commerce of France exhibits only  
 “ ruins and fragments. It admits, that not only  
 “ trade, but domestic industry are entirely extin-  
 D “ guished;

\* Lewis XIVth conquered those provinces in a few days; and our British hero, the gallant Duke of York, shewed such consummate skill and prudence in retarding the operations of the French, who were infinitely superior to him in numbers, that they have not been able to enter any part of those provinces, and they have been many weeks in the conquest of Dutch Brabant only; and probably they would not now be in possession of it, but for the intestine feuds of the inhabitants of it.



“guished; and that Marseilles, Bourdeaux, Lyons, and Nantz, are in a state of desolation. They desire the former to recollect the means which formed her glory and prosperity; that her commune, which prided herself on supplying not only her own wants, but those of the South of France, subsists at present only on the aids granted by government; that with difficulty a few merchants could be collected there, to form two agencies for the remnant of the commerce of the Levant and the coast of Barbary. That the evils suffered by the commune of Nantz resound in every ear. Though thousands have perished by famine, they say, we must tell France that one of the greatest obstacles to the restoration of commerce and exports is the excessive consumption of all productions of the soil in the interior. They say, for corn and provisions, we must give in exchange a part of our wines; and yet they admit that Bourdeaux, in consequence of the great consumption, cannot furnish a sufficient quantity for the demand. They allow, that many departments have lost their harvests by hail, rain, and tempests; but then they say, foreign nations send you their productions, and ask for your’s in return; but you consume every thing yourselves. Will you offer them metals in exchange? what mines have you for that purpose? Industry alone can enable a nation to maintain a balance of trade with other nations.” And yet it was lately insisted in the Convention, that the preservation of Liberty depended in keeping the people in a state of insurrection; and this committee admits, that the raw materials imported for manufactures, are in a state of requisition in the magazines, and under the seals of the republic. It palliates the robberies

ries committed on the half-famished peasant, in these words. " The seas long shut did not allow the government to replace, in some departments, the provisions it had been obliged to borrow for the use of the armies." But when will they be open ; not while the frigates of England, Holland, Spain and Portugal, are hovering on their coasts. It seems that borrowing, plundering, and requisition, are synonymous in France. Though numbers are constantly murdered by the guillotine, or by assassins, this committee say, " Let us engrave on every heart this maxim, remember, republican, that, in whatever part of France you may be, you are among brothers and friends." Sugar, their chief article of exportation, by which they had an immense balance in the Levant and Baltick trade, they have entirely lost. They have no revenue, for it has been totally ruined by the extinction of their commerce. Their chief resource in supplying their banditti in Spain, Flanders, Piedmont, and the Rhine, is in plundering *the peasant of his scanty stock of provisions, and even of his cloaths.\** Much reliance is laid on the confiscation of property, but what can that produce in a kingdom so impoverished, where wealth dooms the possessor of it to certain death? In consequence of a total stagnation of the sale of confiscated estates, it was lately resolved in the Convention, that those who purchase them, shall pay a twentieth part of the principal, every year for twenty years. It has frequently occurred in the sale of these estates, that the fair and honest purchasers have been deprived of them by the government, on a supposition that they were bought too cheap. Though

D 2

their

\* Mons. Galliard, a French writer, gives a melancholy picture of this.

their agriculture is much injured from a want of ~~beasts~~ of the plough, they have lately made a requisition of 44,000 horses and mules. They have gulled the people with an assurance, that the vigorous exertions of this campaign will produce a peace. But they can no longer be deluded, and there are insurrections in many parts of France. The peasant and artisan fly to the frontiers to recruit their armies, from the terrors of the guillotine and domestic famine. Can any person be so void of reason as to suppose, that a nation in such a state of desolation can hold out another campaign. The Committee of General Safety says, "It is for you, representatives of the people, to give great lessons of œconomy. The nations who have recovered, or preserved their liberty, have been remarkable for their simplicity and frugality." This part of the report is true; for it never was known, that so vicious and depraved a people as the French, with so great an extent of empire, could enjoy liberty or happiness under a republic. The Romans, during their primæval simplicity, overturned their regal government at one time, the Decemvirate at another, and could establish a republic in their place; but, on the death of Cæsar, they could not restore liberty, because they were debased by the vices and luxuries of the various nations whom they had subdued. When Caligula was assassinated, the Senate invoked the people to the enjoyment of liberty, but they were too degenerate for the restoration of it. Machiavel observes, "How hard it is for a people that have been used to live in subjection under a prince, to preserve their liberty, if by any means they become free; indeed it cannot be otherwise; for the multitude differs but little from a wild beast." Again he says, "we must lay it down



“ as a certain truth, that a corrupted state, which  
 “ has been accustomed to the dominion of a  
 “ prince, can never become free, though that  
 “ prince, and his whole race should be extin-  
 “ guished.”\*

Machiavel alludes to the establishment of a republic in the place of monarchy. The Romans, galled by the factions of Marius and Sylla and the two Triumvirates, and exhausted by the banishments, the confiscations, and the bloodshed occasioned by them, gladly sought repose in the government of one person. From the strong and lively description which Tacitus gives of their calamitous state, one would imagine that he had the present situation of France in contemplation, for there is very great analogy between them, both in their causes and effects. He who doubts that their miseries will not soon terminate in monarchy, has received no light from the study of human nature, or the history of civil government. Tacitus says, “ That the Romans considered the  
 “ government of one person as an asylum from  
 “ their former perilous state under a republic,  
 “ and that the inhabitants of the provinces con-  
 “ curred with them, because they could have no  
 “ confidence in the government of the Senate  
 “ and the people, on account of the contentions  
 “ of the great, and the avarice of the magistrates;  
 “ and because the laws, being trampled on by  
 “ violence, by canvassing for votes, and by cor-  
 “ ruption, afforded them but a feeble protec-  
 “ tion.”†

I shall

\* Observations on Livy, Lib. i. Chap. 16, 17.

† Tuta & presentia, quam vetera & periculosa mallent, neque provincie illum rerum statum abnuebant, suspecto senatus populi-que imperio, ob certamina potentium & avaritiam magistratum, invalido legum auxilio, quæ vi ambit postremo pecunia turbantur.

I shall now proceed to give you my thoughts on the other subjects which we discussed. Those who wish to enlarge the constituent body, seem to think it too corrupt, and they expect to dilute and purify it, by conferring the elective franchise on a greater number of the community than enjoy it at present; but, unless the people, on whom they would thus bestow it, are of purer principles than those who possess it already, their theory falls to the ground; and, instead of deriving any advantage from it, they will only render elections more turbulent and seditious than before, and extend more widely than ever the baneful effects of ebriety, perjury, and corruption. Such political empirics remind me of an experiment which was formerly made in physic, of transfusing blood from the veins of one person into those of another, in order to meliorate his habit of body, on a presumption that the blood of the former was purer than that of the latter; but modern innovators, contrary to this rule, would propose to purify one body, by infusing into it a portion of another less pure. The true reason of requiring any qualification in point of property in voters, is, not to admit such persons as are in so mean a situation, as that, having no opinion of their own, they may dispose of their votes under some undue influence, and because they are incapable of judging of the competency of a candidate. By teaching the mechanic and peasant to speculate on politics, you will, without gaining any one advantage from it, rob society of their sobriety and industry. If we take a retrospective view of the origin of the qualification of an elector, it will appear, from the material alteration which it has undergone in point of value, by the increase of the precious metals, the progress of luxury, and the great enhancement of the price of all articles of

of life, that a large portion of the people enjoy the elective franchise, whom the wisdom of the legislature originally intended to exclude from it. The county court, in which the sheriff presided, was originally of great dignity and extensive jurisdiction. On the first institution of representatives for counties, none had votes in the election of knights, but such as owed suit and service to the county court, that is, persons of such consideration as held their property immediately of the crown; for such as held of mesne lords, owed suit and service to their lords court. What contributed materially to the alteration of the constitution in this point, as well as in respect of juries, was a shameful indolence in the country gentlemen, who, not wishing to attend in person, at county courts, obtained particular privileges, allowing them to appear there by proxy. Simon de Montfort, an ambitious traitor, who in a rebellion against Henry III. made him and all the royal family prisoners, rendered such privileges general, to conciliate the regard of the gentry, by exempting them from the burthen of attendance; and the lower class of people, by conferring a privilege on them, which till then had been confined to their superiors. The proxies thus deputed by the leading men of property, were generally some of their own freeholders, who came in process of time to be put on juries, in county courts, when there was not enough of the immediate tenants of the crown in court. Thus, by the negligence of gentlemen of good landed property, the county courts came to be debased, as they were mostly composed of mean freeholders, too subject to corruption, and seldom qualified by their knowledge, judgment, virtue or independence, to decide in causes that came before them in judicature. But it does not appear, that



that these freeholders under mesne lords, ever had a share in the election of knights of the shire, till the tumultuary parliament in the first year of the reign of Henry IV. That monarch, who obtained the crown by the murder of Richard II. thinking these inferior freeholders proper instruments to support his usurpation, endeavoured to attach them to him, by establishing their right of voting; and for that purpose procured an act of parliament to be passed, in the seventh year of his reign, appointing the knights of the shire to be elected in the first county court held after the receipt of the writs, by all present, as well suitors duly summoned, as others.\* In consequence of this innovation, infinite riots and disorders ensued at elections, as every freeholder even of 1s. or 6d. claimed a right of voting. These evils became so alarming in the reign of Henry VI. that the legislature found it necessary to apply a remedy to them; and they enacted the 8th of Henry VI. c. 7. in the year 1429, for that purpose. The preamble, which sufficiently evinces the necessity there was for passing it, is an excellent admonition to such speculative innovators, as wish to make an experiment on our constitution, by admitting the giddy and uninformed multitude to the enjoyment of the elective franchise.

“ Whereas the elections of knights of the  
 “ shire have now of late been made by very  
 “ great outrageous and excessive numbers of pe-  
 “ ple, dwelling within the same counties, of  
 “ which

\* It is remarkable, that in all popular states, ambitious leaders have ever made use of the giddy multitude as an engine to obtain power, or to preserve it when usurped. Thus Montfort and Henry IV. in England; Themistocles, Pericles, and Alcibiades, in Athens; the Gracchi, Sylla, and Cæsar, in Rome, courted the people for that purpose.

“ which the most part was of people of small  
 “ substance and of no value, whereof many of  
 “ them pretended a voice equivalent as to such  
 “ elections to be made, with the most worthy  
 “ knights and esquires dwelling within the same  
 “ counties, whereby manslaughter, riots, bat-  
 “ teries, and divisions, among the gentlemen  
 “ and other people of the same county, shall very  
 “ likely rise and be, unless convenient and due  
 “ remedy be provided in this behalf.” It then  
 enacts, “ that no person shall vote at any county  
 “ election, who was not seised of a freehold of  
 “ 40s. a year, and resided in such county; but  
 “ this not removing the evil, it became necessary  
 “ two years after, to provide that the freehold of  
 “ 40s. should lie within the same county.” Let  
 us now endeavour to investigate the value of 40s.  
 at that period, that is, what comforts and neces-  
 saries of life could be procured for it. Bishop  
 Latimer, in a sermon preached before Edward VI.  
 mentions, that his father, having no land of  
 his own, rented a farm at 3l. or 4l. a year; that  
 he tilled a sufficiency thereof to maintain six  
 men; that he kept thirty oxen and one hundred  
 sheep; that he was enabled on it, to give him a  
 good education, and a portion of 5l. to each of  
 his sisters, and to provide a man and horse to  
 attend the king in his wars; that he was as hospi-  
 table and charitable as any of his neighbours.  
 As he says, that he remembered to have buckled  
 on his father's armour at Blackheath, the period  
 he alluded to must have been about 1480, the  
 latter end of Edward IVth's reign; which was 51  
 years after the qualification of an elector was as-  
 certained. And he tells us at the time he preached  
 his sermon, which was about 50 years after, that  
 a person, who occupied the same farm, paid 16l.  
 a year rent, and that he was not able to do any  
 E thing

thing for his prince, for himself, or his children or to give a cup of drink to the poor.\*

Now we may fairly infer, that such comforts of life, as the bishop boasts his father to have enjoyed, could not be procured for less than 300l. a year at present. Bishop Fleetwood, in his *Chronicon Pretiosum*, an ingenious treatise, written in the reign of Charles II. for the purpose of ascertaining the price of provisions, and the value of the precious metals, between that period and the reign of Henry VI. tells us, that they were enhanced in a fourfold proportion; and I think it must be admitted, that they are five times dearer than they were in the reign of Charles II. not only from the increase of specie, but the prodigious quantity of paper money, which has come into circulation. According to this calculation, the qualification of an elector should not now be less than 40l. Carte, a very learned historian, was of this opinion; and he is dead about 50 years. The average price of wheat in Henry VIth's reign, was from 4s. to 4s. 6d. the quarter, at the rate of 40s. or 45s. of our present money; that of an ox from 4s. to 4s. 6d. that of a sheep, from 4d. to 6d. Thus it appears, from what I have now stated, that the elective franchise has, in process of time, fallen into the hands of a class of the people, whom the legislature intended to exclude from it, because they were incompetent to exercise it. Theoretic innovators are vehement in making elections more popular than they are at present, on a presumption that they would be more consonant to justice and equality, and less liable to influence; but experience condemns such a change, as it must render them

\* Latimer's Sermons, folio 32, edit. 1635.



them subject to the influence of the worst men, and productive of tumult and corruption. The uninformed multitude may be practised on, to purposes however violent, however depraved; but what appeal can be made to their reason, beyond their competence, beyond their feelings? Can the peasant who holds the plough, or the blacksmith who stands at an anvil, have judgment to decide between the political merit of two candidates, their votes in former parliaments, or the principles that are likely to determine their conduct in future? But let a candidate appear before them, who promises to abolish all taxes and rents, to reduce the price of gin, to lay embargoes on corn, and to let them plunder farmers granaries, such arguments they will understand, and such a candidate will be borne triumphant on the shoulders of the people, while his opposer will be trodden under their feet. The present state of France furnishes an irrefragable proof of the fatal consequences of converting the industrious part of the community into politicians, and of appealing to their decisions. The mass of the people in a state may be compared to the life blood of the human body, which, if pure, will produce health and vigour; but if impure, will kindle fevers, or produce debility and languor; though that body may be formed according to the strictest principles of symmetry and just proportion. This is illustrated by the situation of some new towns in England, which have suddenly risen by trade to great opulence, because the honourable privilege of sending delegates to parliament has not been imparted to them; nay, they deprecate that honour, because it would induce idleness and ebriety, and be attended with serious mischief to their manufactures. The advocates

for universal suffrage contend, that the fatal consequences which have constantly arisen in republics, from the direct interference of the multitude in matters of legislation, will be avoided by the representative system, of which the ancients were totally ignorant: but the state of France, where it is limited, proves, when it is enjoyed by a large portion of the people, that their opinions, their caprices, and prejudices, will press on the representatives of the people in such an irresistible torrent, that they cannot oppose them without danger; and artful seditious men will ever be ready to flatter and agitate the people, and to solicit their interference. As the French have adopted this system, common prudence suggests, that we should see whether it will thrive with them, and if it promotes moral harmony and industry, and secures all social rights, better than our own, let us embrace it. The great Lord Bacon gives us the following advice in his *Essays on the Subject of Reform*: “ It is good not to try  
 “ experiments in states, except the necessity be  
 “ urgent, or the utility evident: and well to be-  
 “ ware, that it be the reformation that draweth  
 “ on the change, and not the desire of change  
 “ that pretendeth the reformation. And lastly,  
 “ that the novelty, though it be not rejected, yet  
 “ be held for a suspect; and as the Scripture  
 “ sayeth, that we make a good stand upon the  
 “ ancient way, and then look about us and dis-  
 “ cover what is the straight and right way, and  
 “ so to walk in it.” As many innovators, who declaim loudly against our constitution, and urge a necessity of restoring it to its pristine purity, and of re-establishing the rights of the people, which is their general language; I am led to draw a short comparison between the ancient and present state of it, by which the balance will appear  
 much

much in favour of the latter, and that the life, the liberty and property of the subject, were but badly secured before the petition of rights in the reign of Charles I. and that they are at this time better guarded than at any former period, or in any other state in Europe. In short, before James the First's reign, our history presents nothing but a struggle between the violent exertions of monarchical despotism and aristocratical turbulence, while the people were in a downright state of slavery ; at the same time the police of England was worse than that of any other kingdom in Europe.\* Peter de la Mare, who was the first speaker of the House of Commons, was imprisoned by Edward III. for liberty of speech. When this monarch was building Windsor Castle, he issued writs to the sheriffs of many counties, ordering them, under the penalty of 100*l.* each, to send to Windsor the best diggers and hewers of stone within their bailiwicks, and to oblige them to give sufficient security not to depart thence without the licence of William of Wyckham ; and writs were issued to the sheriffs of London, commanding them to make proclamation to inhibit any person, whether clerk or layman, under forfeiture of all they had forfeitable, from employing and retaining any such tradesman, and to arrest such of them as had run away, and commit them to Newgate. Writs were issued in the 36th year of his reign to the sheriffs of several counties, commanding them, under the penalty of 200*l.* to send to Windsor on a particular day, skilful masons and diggers of stone.† Edward III. made such a common practice of violating the great charter,

\* In doing this it will be unnecessary to go higher than the reign of Edward III.

† Ashmole's History of the Order of the Garter.



charter, that he was required to grant no less than twenty confirmations of it. In his reign, robbers, thieves, and murderers, were very common in England, and were protected and encouraged by the Barons, who employed them against their enemies. The King obtained a solemn promise from the Barons in Parliament, that they would break off all connection with them.\* He exercised a dispensing power, erected monopolies, exacted loans, stopped the progress of criminal and civil justice by particular warrants, pressed both men and ships into his service, levied arbitrary and exorbitant fines. He extended the authority of the Privy Council and Star Chamber to the decision of private cases, enlarged the power of the Marshals and other arbitrary courts, imprisoned members of Parliament for freedom of speech. He constantly levied taxes arbitrarily, and without consent of Parliament. One time they remonstrated against it; but he answered, that he would advise with his council; and he positively refused to pass a law for punishing those who raised such arbitrary impositions. Most of the Plantagenet princes maintained and exercised these extraordinary powers: but those of the House of Lancaster were more moderate in the practice of them, as the doubtfulness of their title kept them in awe.

Henry VII. constantly exalted his prerogative above law. Early in his reign, the authority of the Star Chamber, founded on common law and antient practice, was in some cases extended and confirmed by Act of Parliament.† It exercised a discretionary power of fining, imprisoning, and inflicting corporal punishment, without the intervention

\* Cotton's Abridgment.

† Rot. Parl. 3d Hen. VII. 11. 17.

vention of a jury ; but did not punish capitally. It had jurisdiction over all offences, contempts, and disorders, which were not within the reach of common law ; and yet Lord Bacon praised the use of it. The members of it consisted of privy counsellors and judges, who held their places during pleasure. In this reign it was employed as an engine to extort fines and pecuniary penalties from the subject.

Lord Clarendon tells us, that its authority was exerted to enforce proclamations, orders of state, monopolies, and illegal commissions. The Court of the Constable, which existed since the time of William the Conqueror, exercised martial law with unbounded jurisdiction ; and was not governed in its proceedings by any fixed rules whatever : it even inflicted capital punishment. It would have been a dreadful engine of tyranny in the King, but that, having been commonly granted for life, it was not under his immediate controul. For this reason Henry VIII. abolished it : however, martial law continued afterwards to be exercised, till abolished by the Petition of Rights. In the year 1495 the Parliament passed a law, empowering Henry VII. to levy all such sums as any person had agreed to pay by way of benevolence. Henry VII. demanded a subsidy, and 3-15ths, to marry his daughter to the King of Scotland. Sir Thomas Moore, then but 22 years old, was the only person in the House of Commons who dared to oppose it. For this the King picked a quarrel with his father, committed him to the Tower, and fined him 100*l.* and Sir Thomas was obliged to leave the bar, and had some thoughts of quitting the kingdom for some years.\* Associations of large bodies of the people, in uniform,

\* Biographia Brit. Life of Sir Thomas Moore.

form, and under the protection of the barons, for the purpose of committing murders, rapes, and robberies, and exercising private vengeance, and even of giving evidence in courts of justice, continued, from a very early period, till the reign of Henry VII. ; and in his time they rose to such an excess, that many laws were passed to restrain them ; however, they were frequently practised afterwards. By 31st of Henry VIII. the Parliament gave the King's proclamation the force of law, and enjoined obedience to it, under whatever penalties he should choose to impose. Another law was passed, that any nine privy counsellors should form a legal court for punishing all disobedience to proclamations. [At that period, the Parliament were so little jealous of their privileges, that one Strode, a member, was heavily fined by the stannery courts, and was loaded with irons, and thrown into a dungeon, because he refused to pay the fines ; and this for no other reason, than because he introduced a bill regarding tin ; yet the Parliament took no other notice of it, than to pass a law that no man should be afterwards questioned for his conduct in Parliament. Henry VIII. levied the duties of tonnage and poundage without the authority of Parliament ; and his successor continued to do so. Edward VI. wrote circular letters to sheriffs, recommending particular members for counties ; and he ordered them in other instances to obey, in that respect, the orders of his privy-counsellors. Queen Mary pursued the like method, in the election of members of Parliament. Both she and Edward VI. wound their prerogative as high as Henry VIII. Queen Elizabeth surpassed all her predecessors in the exercise of it. She extended the court of Star Chamber over all persons, and to every species of delinquency, not within



within the verge of common or statute law, or in other words, to every thing that the court thought proper to take amiss. Though it did not punish capitally, yet it inflicted such corporal punishments as were worse than death, and such ruinous fines, as tended to make life a burthen.

Another dreadful engine of her administration, was the high commission court. Its department included all spiritual transgressions; among which, not only incest and adultery, but even fornication, was comprehended, all deviations from uniformity in public worship, and all errors in opinion. It was subject to no inhibition from the civil courts, and its punishment had no restriction.

Besides these abuses which were permanent, there was another occasional one, still more dangerous; this was the proclamation of martial law. Whenever this monster was let loose, the provost martial, the lord lieutenant of a county, or any of his deputies, could instantly put to death whomsoever they thought proper. Had this dreadful engine been confined to times of rebellion, or dangerous insurrection, it might have been justified on the ground of political necessity; but it was sometimes granted when no such pretexts existed. In the year 1595, Elizabeth commissioned Sir Thomas Wilford to execute, by martial law, all such persons in London, and the counties contiguous, whom the magistrates should represent as notorious vagabonds; nay, she ordered martial law to be enforced against such persons as should import papal bulls, or forbidden books or pamphlets. This sanguinary exercise of martial law appears in one signal instance. Soon after the disturbance occasioned by the earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, which had more the appearance of a frantic riot than a dangerous rebellion,

bellion, the provost martial executed, in cold blood, eight hundred persons who had been, more or less, concerned in it. Whoever compares the sacrifices made to justice, after the rebellions in 1715 and 1745, or even with the severities of Jeffries, in the reign of James II. will perceive that the rigour of Elizabeth's age far exceeded them. The liberty of the press was incompatible with the maxims of her government. By a decree of the Star Chamber, she forbid any book to be printed but in London, Oxford, or Cambridge; and by another, she prohibited, under severe penalties, the publishing any book or pamphlet contrary to the form or meaning of any statute, or against any injunction made or set forth by her or her privy-council, or against the form or meaning of any of her letters-patent, or commissions or prohibitions under the great seal: every publication, even down to ballads, was made subject to inspectors appointed for that purpose. Forty-four sheets of Hollingshead's Chronicle were cancelled by order of the council; and on reading these castrations (for they have since been published) one can scarcely discern how or why they were obnoxious. When Elizabeth was inclined to marry the Duke of Anjou, one Stubbs, a lawyer, published a pamphlet, containing arguments against it. For this offence, he and his printer were condemned to lose their right hands. Stubbs, though a puritan, was very loyal, and shewed wonderful resignation to the sentence; for as soon as he suffered the amputation, he took off his hat with his left hand, and said, God save the Queen.\* Stowe mentions the names of several writers who suffered at the gallows for publishing what he styles offensive, and at other times seditious performances.

\* Strype's Annals, vol. iii. p. 148.

formances. Purveyance was another tyrannic grievance in her reign. These purveyors seized at discretion on all kinds of provision, allowed a much lower rate than the market price, and were very tedious in paying for them. The people must have suffered severely from those galling oppressions, as some counties paid 2000*l.* a-year to be exempt from them.\* What was still more mortifying, the purveyors seized on trees; and often took such as were ornamental, and afforded shelter to gentlemen's houses. Elizabeth's manner of pressing for the army and navy was singularly grievous.

When men were wanting, she compelled the counties, on which they were apportioned, to raise, arm, clothe, and conduct them to the sea-ports, entirely at their own expense. The oppressions attending this practice, appear from a speech of Mr. Glascock, a member of the House of Commons. *If a warrant (says he) comes from the council to levy one hundred men, the magistrate will levy two hundred; and then by chopping in and crossing out, he will gain one hundred men by the bargain.* This method was to fix, at first, on those he knew to be least willing to serve, and best able to pay him for excusing their default.† Stowe relates one instance of pressing, which was very remarkable. When the Londoners were assembled in their churches, on an Easter Sunday, to receive the sacrament, the doors were suddenly closed by the city officers, who seized one thousand of the congregation; and on that evening they were sent as recruits to the coast of France. Of all the grievances of her reign, that of granting monopolies was most extensively ruinous. The grantee of a

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monopoly

\* Biograph. Britan. Phillips, (Fabian)

† Parliamentary History, vol. iv.



monopoly had no other view but to make it as lucrative as possible. Most of the necessary articles, such as paper, beer, ale, leather, corn, iron, tin, lead, sea-coal, fish, and even salt, were consigned to these vultures, who affixed what price they chose to them. They at one time raised salt from 1s. 4d. to 15s. a bushel. Elizabeth assumed a power, which she frequently exercised, of stopping the current of justice. If any person were involved in a law-suit, or even threatened with one, he could obtain, if he had a friend at court, a warrant from the Queen, to exempt him from all civil suits or criminal prosecutions. Some of these instruments are to be found in Rymer's *Fœdera*, containing positive declarations that she granted them by virtue of her prerogative, which she would not suffer to be disputed. Thus she, like Venus in Homer and Virgil, could furnish her favourites with a suit of armour, which enabled them to set justice at defiance. Torture was considered as a necessary engine of her government, and was constantly made use of. The Duke of Norfolk's servants (and they were probably numerous) underwent this barbarity. Hacket, the enthusiast, was tortured. One Richard Toplist, a priest-catcher, speaks jocularly of different kinds of torture, in a letter preserved by Strype.\* He recommended it to be tried upon Robert Southwell, a friar, and he engaged that it would extort from him every secret in his heart. The Queen proposed to torture Sir John Haywood the historian, on account of his compositions, which happened to offend her, though without a shadow of cause; and it would have been inflicted upon him, but for the humane interference of Sir Francis Bacon. When one was obnoxious

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\* Vol. iv. p. 132.

to Queen Elizabeth, or seemed likely to obstruct her views, she compelled him to accept a lucrative employment abroad. Another hardship was, that no nobleman could marry without her consent. The Earl of Southampton was imprisoned, and deprived of his commission as general of horse in Ireland, for having indulged his inclinations, without the consent of the court. During her reign no nobleman was allowed to travel without having previously obtained a licence from the court.\* The House of Commons has ever been considered as the guardian of the rights of the people; and we should expect that it would have relieved the subjects from such accumulated oppression. Let us examine how Elizabeth treated that august body. It was a fundamental maxim with her, that Parliaments should not discuss any matters of state, or any ecclesiastical concern. Sir Edward Coke, the Speaker, in 1593, used these words: *I am commanded, on my allegiance, if any bill should be exhibited touching matters of state, or causes ecclesiastical, not to read it.*† The former of these inhibitions was never infringed; and if it ever was attempted, punishment was sure to follow. When a bill was introduced, in the year 1593, for regulating the succession to the Crown, four eminent members were imprisoned for their presumption; and afterwards, when a member made a motion to address her Majesty to release them, those members who were of her privy-council opposed the motion, declaring that their interposition would make their case the worse.‡ When William Morris brought in a bill for correcting abuses in the bishops' courts, he was removed from his place as chancellor of the duchy,

\* Political Survey of Britain, lib. i. chap. v.

† Parliamentary History.

‡ Ibid.

duchy, disabled from practising as a lawyer, and imprisoned for several years in Tilbury castle. \*

She absolutely proceeded so far, as to restrain them from all acts of legislation. The following words are to be found in the Lord Keeper's speech in 1593: *Her Majesty has willed me to signify unto you, that this Parliament is not called to make any new laws, for there are a sufficient number; wherefore it is her pleasure that your time be not spent therein.* † The Parliament of Queen Elizabeth scarce ever presumed to entertain any other points than the three following: First, arranging some minute particulars of internal economy, which she thought fit to leave to their direction. Secondly, sanctioning any unpopular measures, the odium of which she would avoid. And lastly, (but above all) imposing taxes on the people; and as this was avowedly regarded as their principal function, she claimed great merit in seldom calling one; and accordingly, at one period of her reign, she did not call one for five years. In the instructions composed by Burleigh for the Speaker's speech in 1592, he is instructed to display, as a proof of her Majesty's benignity to her people, her unwillingness to call Parliaments. ‡ In this paper we are informed that the court directed the Speaker what he should speak, and that he was the mouth-piece of the minister as much as of the House. We may form some idea of the extent of senatorial eloquence in her days, by the words of the Lord Keeper, Sir Edward Puckering. When Sir Edward Coke, the Speaker, requested that the House might be indulged in freedom of speech, "*privilege of speech is granted; but you must know what privilege you have; not to speak what every*"  
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\* Hume.

† Parliamentary History.

‡ Strype's Annals, vol. iv. p. 124.



“ *one listeth, or what cometh into his brain to utter,*  
 “ *but your privilege is Aye or No.*”\* The judges,  
 in 1561, solemnly determined that England was  
 an absolute empire. It may perhaps be thought,  
 that they annexed to the word absolute some  
 meaning different from the common acceptation;  
 but the words which follow them will ascertain  
 it, which words assert, that England is an abso-  
 lute empire, and that the Queen, by her own au-  
 thority, might have erected the high commission  
 court, without being impowered by any act of  
 parliament.

Now if she could establish, and set in motion  
 so dreadful an engine of tyranny by her own fiat,  
 she must have been deemed absolute in the fullest  
 sense of the word.† It was also determined ju-  
 dicially in her reign, that any person imprisoned by  
 her authority, could not be bailed.‡ The Queen,  
 says Sir Francis Bacon in one of his speeches, hath  
 both an enlarging and restraining power: she can  
 set at liberty by her prerogative things restrained  
 by statute, and she can restrain by her prerogative  
 things that are at liberty.§ During, and pre-  
 vious to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the House  
 of Commons were of such little weight in the ba-  
 lance of the constitution, that it was usual with  
 the Chancellor to use discretionary authority in  
 issuing new writs to supply the place of any  
 members whom he judged incapable of attending,  
 either on account of their employment, or sick-  
 ness, or any other impediment, which gave the  
 minister a power of garbling the House at plea-  
 sure; and so little jealous were the Commons of  
 it, that they confirmed it by their votes in the 23d  
 of Elizabeth.|| James the First had as high no-  
 tions

\* Parliamentary History.

† Hume.

‡ Ibid.

§ Parliamentary History.

|| Journals, Jan. 19, 1580.

tions of his prerogative as Queen Elizabeth. He continued to exercise such as may be deemed incompatible with civil liberty. He raised money on the subject by way of benevolence or free-gift. He imprisoned two members of the House of Commons, Sir Edwyn Sandys and Mr. Selden, for no other reason than the extraordinary zeal which they shewed in discharge of their duty.\* At another time he committed Sir Edward Coke and Sir Robert Philips to the Tower: Selden, Pym, and Mallory, to other prisons.† I think it right to observe, as an instance of the frailty of our nature, that Sir Edward Coke, who, when Speaker of the House of Commons in Elizabeth's reign, told that assembly that they should not meddle with state affairs, or matters of a religious concern, became now a violent opponent of the court. James exercised the power which Elizabeth did, of employing such members as were obnoxious to him, in any public service he chose. He sent Sir Dudley Digges, Sir Thomas Crew, Sir Nathaniel Rich, and Sir James Perratt, to Ireland, under the pretext of executing business there.‡ In the year 1621 he wrote a letter to the Speaker, in which he severely rebuked the members, for having presumed to meddle with any thing that regarded his government, or deep matters of state; which he said were far above their capacity.§ However the House of Commons adopted some spirited resolutions in this reign, which laid the foundation of that liberty which they asserted in the subsequent one; and monopolies were condemned by act of parliament, as contrary to law, in 1624. In this reign Sir Roger Owen, though a patriot, declared in the House, when arguing against arbitrary impositions, that the King of England was endued with as ample power as any prince in Christendom.||

\* Journals, Dec. 1, 1621.

† Franklyn, p. 66.

‡ Ibid. § Hume, chap. 48.

|| Journals, April 18, 1614.

This monstrous fabric of despotism was demolished by one blow in the next reign; for by the petition of rights, in the year 1628, an eternal remedy was provided against forced loans and benevolences, taxes without consent of Parliament, arbitrary imprisonment, billeting of soldiers, and martial law. By the 16th Charles I. chap. 10. if any person be deprived of his liberty by order or decree of any illegal court, or by the commandment of his Majesty in person, or by warrant of the council board, or any of the privy council, he shall, on demand, have a writ of habeas corpus to bring him before the Court of King's Bench or Common Pleas, who shall determine on the legality of his commitment; and by the 31st Charles II. commonly called the Habeas Corpus Act, the method of obtaining the benefit of this act is so obvious and summary, that a subject must be discharged immediately if committed contrary to law. Much has been said against suspending this act, though it has been often done in times less perilous than the present. The court of Areopagus at Athens had a general censorial power, which in many cases, extended to imprisonment at discretion, and even to death. The Censors at Rome could degrade any person from his rank for any public violation of morals. One of them degraded Rufinus, an ancestor of Sylla, because he had plate in his house to the amount of five marks. The appointment of a Dictator suspended all law; and when the senate in times of danger passed a vote, *ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat*, every inferior magistrate was invested with power equal with that of the Dictator. The Crown still enjoyed considerable wealth from the appendages of the military tenures, which were very grievous and oppressive to the subjects; such as wardships, liveries, primer fei-

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fins,



fines, values and forfeitures of marriages, ousterle-  
 main, fines for alienation, tenures by homage,  
 knights' service, escuage, aids for marrying the  
 daughter and knighting the son, and tenures held  
 of the king *in capite*; all which were abolished by  
 the 12th of Charles II. and in consideration of it  
 the King obtained the hereditary excise. These  
 tenures formed a most complicated system of sla-  
 very, and yet they were the inherent and un-  
 questionable right of the Crown. An able writer  
 on our laws observes, that this statute was a greater  
 acquisition to civil property than even Magna  
 Charta itself; since that had only pruned the luxu-  
 riances, which had grown out of the military  
 tenures, and thereby preserved them in vigour;  
 but the statute of Charles extirpated the whole,  
 and demolished both root and branches. To  
 these succeeded the Bill of Rights, or declaration  
 delivered by the Lords and Commons to the Prince  
 and Princess of Orange, 13th Feb. 1688, and  
 afterwards passed into a law, by which the free-  
 dom of our constitution in church and state is  
 established in the clearest and most unequivocal  
 terms; and by the coronation oath, which was  
 entirely new-modelled in the year 1689, the king  
 and queen are obliged to swear, in the most ex-  
 plicit manner, to maintain them. It was asserted  
 again, at the commencement of the present cen-  
 tury, by the Act of Settlement, when new pro-  
 visions were added for securing our religion, laws,  
 and liberties. By the statute of 1st Anne, chap. 7,  
 the Crown is restrained from aliening the de-  
 mesne lands, or even from letting them for any  
 term longer than three lives, or 31 years, though  
 till that period the English monarchs enjoyed  
 them without the controul of parliament. His  
 present Majesty has contributed very much to  
 preserve the liberty of the subject, and render the  
 administration

administration of justice chaste, by making the judges independent of the Crown, which was his own voluntary act. General warrants have been condemned in the present reign. The act for determining contested elections by a Committee of the House of Commons on oath, has completely secured the freedom of election. The act which requires, in the case of a person indicted for a libel, that the law and fact shall be decided by a jury, has rescued the subject from the possibility of being oppressed by a severe or arbitrary judge; and has established the liberty of the press on a firm basis. I will now appeal to the candid reader, whether a more perfect system of liberty can be devised by human wisdom than that which I have described. Those who contend for the necessity of reforming the constitution cannot deny the facts which I have laid down; but they will assert, that the influence of the Crown is more dangerous than the prerogatives which I have stated; and some have maintained that it should be entirely removed, others that it should only be diminished. But those who are well acquainted with the history and progressive improvements of our constitution, and with the nature of man, so essentially necessary to form a just notion of the true principles of civil polity, must acknowledge that this influence constitutes the chief excellence of ours. As theory and abstract reasoning ever lead to error, and as experience is the only sure guide in political discussions, let us examine whether the subjects of England have been more happy, or have enjoyed more liberty since the operation of this influence, or before it existed? When James the First's prerogative began to be questioned and successfully opposed, he found it necessary to make some friends in parliament, by the distribution of considerable offices

among the members of great power and abilities; and they not continuing to receive their wages as usual, wished to join honour to profit. The Court and Country parties then were first formed, in the Parliament which sat in the year 1620, and have continued ever since; and though they seem to threaten its existence, are the real causes of its permanent life and vigour. Till this period a seat in parliament was so little regarded, that many towns, which had neglected their right of returning members, now eagerly claimed that privilege.\* The first instance of the King's using any influence in the House of Commons by bestowing favour, was in the person of Sir John Saville, a violent opponent of the court, and he was made comptroller of the household, a privy counsellor, and a baron, in the year 1621. In the year 1630, Sir Thomas Wentworth, afterwards Lord Stafford, † Sir Dudley Digges Heath attorney, and Noy, solicitor general, though violent popular leaders, were invested with office.

When the English monarchs were deprived of those powers and prerogatives which they had enjoyed till the Petition of Rights, and before they had any considerable influence in Parliament, our constitution was in substance a republic; for, like Poland, it was subject to all those factions which attend the workings of ambition and avarice, without that energy which constitutes the chief excellence of monarchy; and the councils of the nation were remarkable for turbulence, weakness, and instability. In the year 1668, Sir William Temple pressed an offensive

\* Journals, 10th of Feb. 1620.

† He was afterwards brought to the block for illegal exertions of power, and for straining the prerogative too high; which is a strong proof of the frailty and instability of man, and how unfit he is for a Republic.



five league between England and Holland, in order to oppose the aspiring views of Louis the Fourteenth, who threatened the safety of both. But De Witt, the pensionary of Holland, objected to it ; because, he said, that ever since the reign of Elizabeth, there had been such a fluctuation in the councils of England, that it was not possible to take any certain measures with that kingdom for three years together.\* In Charles the Second's reign, the Prince of Conde used frequently to say, in irony, to the English ambassador at Paris, " Pray who was your minister by the last packet † ? " King William, though saluted, on his arrival in England, with general acclamations, as the saviour of our constitution, was scarce seated on his throne, when he found Parliament so rent by a spirit of party, that he was on the point of abandoning the kingdom, and of returning to Holland. Portland, Sommers, Halifax, and Albemarle, his most faithful servants, were impeached, though they had been principally concerned in bringing about the revolution ; and, what was very insulting and mortifying to him, he was obliged to dismiss his Dutch guards, though so few in number, that they could not have been an object of national jealousy. On the peace of Ryswick, administration were so weak, that they could obtain a military establishment of no more than ten thousand men ; though there was a strong faction in favour of James the Second, and though his cause was warmly espoused by Louis the Fourteenth, who maintain-  
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\* This is an excellent admonition to those who contend that we should make peace with that horde of assassins, the French, who cannot have any permanent government whatever.

† Lewis the Fourteenth had numerous friends in the British Parliament by the means of bribery, during the reigns of Charles the Second and James the Second.

ed a formidable army. In the year 1689, when the rival factions of Whig and Tory were nearly balanced, the kingdom was in a perilous and alarming state; for they, by their strenuous exertions to obtain a majority in the elections, which recurred every three years, kept the kingdom in a state of feverish turbulence, baneful to industry, to the morals of the people, and to the peace of society; and the King was obliged to embrace that party which had gained the upper hand, by which he was prevented from selecting such Ministers as were distinguished by their talents and probity. In the year 1689, the Tories having gained an ascendancy in Parliament, the King was obliged to employ them, though conscious that they were inimical to his accession; and even with them, his party not being strong enough to carry on the ordinary business of the nation, he was under the necessity of employing Sir John Trevor to gain an ascendancy in Parliament by means which must have been painful to his generous mind; but he found it absolutely necessary, as Louis the Fourteenth had acquired great influence in the Parliament of England by bribery. The late King of Sweden found himself in a worse situation from the same cause; for there was scarce a monarch in Europe that had not procured friends in the Swedish senate through bribery; nay, the Pope had gained a party in it. At last the King, finding himself tottering on his throne, and being too poor to appease these contending factions, by places, pensions, or pecuniary donations, was obliged to extinguish them by overturning the constitution.

The extreme virulence and rancour of the two factions of Whig and Tory, from the Revolution to the end of George the First's reign, constantly convulsing and weakening the government, prove  
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how necessary the influence of the Crown is. In the impeachment of the four peers, which I have already mentioned, the Commons proceeded in so seditious and vindictive a manner, that the people took the alarm, and admonished them; and they, dreading popular resentment, found it necessary to become more moderate. At one time, the Lords, by a seasonable opposition, checked the Commons in their revengeful career. At another time, the Peers, actuated by selfish motives, would have deprived the King of his most salutary and precious prerogative, if the Commons had not rejected the bill for limiting the peerage; though in this the latter were influenced by sinister views. It occurred also that the King was, at times, obliged to oppose the two Houses with his negative, when they with united force pressed forward like a torrent. During this tempestuous season, we find that the opposition, whenever they ejected their rivals from office, regularly pursued the measures which they had previously condemned; and in the year 1695, one party violated the principles of evidence in a trial for high treason, which they themselves had established by law but a few months before.

From the Revolution to the end of George the Second's reign, the chief topics of censure and crimination against the Court party were a standing army, continental connections, and the greatness of the supply; and yet the Country party uniformly adopted them when they had succeeded their adversaries in office. Lord Bolingbroke, while in administration, employed the arts of corruption and court influence as much, nay, more than any Minister that preceded him. In the year 1711, he recommended to Queen Anne to create twelve new peers at once, to gain an ascendancy



dancy in the House of Lords, which was reckoned a very dangerous measure; and yet in his political dissertations, dictated by a revengeful party spirit, when disappointed ambition had soured his mind, and had converted him into a speculative patriot, he severely condemns that practice, and asserts, that by depriving the Crown of the means of bribing, there will be an end of bribery. His assertion is strictly true; but, as the hope of obtaining wealth and honors is the main inducement to men of great abilities to enter into the House of Commons, by extinguishing it you will reduce that body to the state of torpor and insignificance in which it was before the reign of James the First, or you will kindle in it that furious turbulence which ever attends a republic. It is not to be supposed that Ministers would make use of Court influence, which must render them odious in the eyes of the nation, unless they were driven to the necessity of it, and that necessity will ever exist while man continues to be a creature of interest and passion. Were man as pure as our first parents before their fall, we may expect that he would invariably pursue the dictates of wisdom and virtue; but when we know that he is a frail creature, and subject to the dominion of strong passions, which we cannot alter or extinguish, it will be absurd to think of making him conform to an abstract system of polity devised by visionary theorists, we must be contented to adopt a government suitable to his nature. Milton has so beautifully described this in the Twelfth Book of his *Paradise Lost*, where the Angel represents to Adam the moral condition of man, that I am tempted to give it to the reader:

Yet

Yet know withal,  
 Since thy original lapse, true liberty  
 Is lost, which always with right reason dwells,  
 Twinn'd, and from her hath no dividual being.  
 Reason in man subdu'd, or not obey'd,  
 Immediately inordinate desires  
 And upstart passions catch the government  
 From reason, and to servitude reduce  
 Man, till then free.

In the year 1721, the Ministry gained a considerable influence in Parliament; and from that time the councils of the nation have displayed more wisdom and stability than at any former period; and the British empire has been gradually acquiring a degree of strength, splendor, and opulence, which no country of the same extent ever attained. Under the benign influence of such a constitution, England has been enabled, not only to protect herself, but to gain immortal glory, against the united powers of America, France, Spain, and Holland, and at this time to prevent the French robbers and assassins from spreading anarchy and desolation through every part of Europe.

*O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint agricolas!*

The actual state of the English government is this: the Minister, with the aid of the Court party, carries on the necessary business of the state, and prevents the popular spirit of our constitution from overturning it.

*Ni faciat, maria ac terras, cœlumque profundum,  
 Quippe ferant rapidi secum verrantque per auras.*

On the other hand, the Country party behold with a vigilant eye the proceedings of their antagonists, and ring the alarm-bell, whenever they

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proceed too far, in extending the prerogative of the Crown, or in squandering the public money: and their zeal on this occasion, though it ultimately redounds to the advantage of the community, seldom flows from pure motives of patriotism, but from those of avarice and ambition. They are at length rewarded, for rendering those important services to the public, by succeeding in their turn to those places of honour and emolument which the Court party had occupied, and no persons can be better qualified to discharge the complicated and laborious functions of government, from their long attention to them. In *Madame Pompadour's Memoirs* there appears a letter written by an English Minister to Cardinal Fleury, who then guided the helm in France, which throws some light on the state of party at that time in England. Sir Robert Walpole and the Cardinal had a mutual good understanding with each other, and wished to preserve their respective countries from the calamities of war; but the opposition, thinking he had not abilities to carry it on, were very vehement in their endeavours to involve England in hostilities with France. In this letter Sir Robert wrote as follows:

“ I pension half the Parliament to keep it quiet; but, as the King's money is insufficient, they to whom I give none clamour loudly for war. It would be expedient for your Excellence to remit me three millions of livres, to silence the barkers. Gold is a metal which corrects all the ill qualities of the blood. A pension of 2000l. a year will make the most tempestuous warrior as tame as a lamb.”\*

No person can deny that Lord Chatham had as disinterested an attachment to his country as any person that ever existed, and yet he found court influence



influence indispensably necessary to keep Parliament quiet. In the year 1757 he had the entire formation of a new ministry; and he put the Duke of Newcastle at the head of it, not from any liking he had for him, or on account of his abilities, but because, as he said openly on a subsequent occasion, that he borrowed his pocket majority *from him* to carry on the public business; for the Duke's brother, Mr. Pelham, when at the head of the treasury, had made terms with the Parliament, and had given his pocket majority to the Duke.\* The observations of the moderate party at the time of the Revolution, are an excellent illustration of the remarks which I have made, and of the advantages arising from a spirit of party, when kept within due bounds. That the revolution having been brought about by a coalition of whigs and tories, the former were obliged to make concessions to the latter, and to be contented with the concessions which they could get from them in their turn. That political wisdom is founded more on experience than theory: that all the improvements of the English constitution have arisen from applying remedies to evils that were felt, and not to those which men thought they foresaw: that its duration has been owing to the constant vibration between the executive and legislative powers upon each other, which fixes the attention of the citizens upon the public, as if they were guards set on watch, and keeps both powers in awe of each other: and that the first calm of unanimity in Great-Britain, will be the last sigh of expiring freedom; that a King who can raise neither money nor forces without consent of Parliament, is under a continued necessity of resorting to it; and that where the de-  
claration

\* Lord Chatham's Life.

claration of rights, with all its imperfections, was joined to those constitutional articles which have already been established, the whole records of mankind presented not a system of freedom so complete and so happy.

During twelve years that England tried a republican form of government, she experienced greater misery, and more oppression, than under the most despotic Kings. That many-headed monster underwent no less than eight forms in that short space of time. Arbitrary imprisonment, of which the Parliament were so anxious to deprive Charles I. was exercised so wantonly, without information or any form of law, that all the prisons in England were crowded with persons whom the mere suspicion of the ruling party had regarded as dangerous. The laws against high treason were enlarged and extended to verbal offences, and even to intentions. The sequestration and forfeitures of the estates of the royalists, and the compositions for them, the sale of the crown lands, and those of the deans and chapters, were insufficient to defray the monstrous expense of so irregular a government, and to gratify the Parliament, and the various instruments, whom Cromwell employed in every part of the kingdom to maintain his tyranny. At length the people of England, groaning under such a dreadful system of despotism, re-established that constitution which afforded the most perfect security for all social rights; and the following words of Shakespeare might have been aptly applied to them:

The commonwealth is sick of their own choice,  
Their over-greedy love hath surfeited.

F I N I S.









Letter 124

C. P. M. 124